

JOHN F. COOK  
MAYOR

JOYCE WILSON  
CITY MANAGER



**CITY COUNCIL**  
ANN MORGAN LILLY, DISTRICT 1  
SUSANNAH M. BYRD, DISTRICT 2  
EMMA ACOSTA, DISTRICT 3  
CARL ROBINSON, DISTRICT 4  
MICHEL R. NOE, DISTRICT 5  
EDDIE HOLGUIN JR., DISTRICT 6  
STEVE ORTEGA, DISTRICT 7  
CORTNEY CARLISLE NILAND, DISTRICT 8

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**  
**10<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM**  
**JULY 5, 2011**  
**11:30 A.M.**

The City Council met at the above place and date. Meeting was called to order at 11:50 a.m. Mayor John Cook present and presiding and the following Council Members answered roll call: Ann Morgan Lilly, Susie Byrd, Carl Robinson, Michiel Noe, Steve Ortega, and Cortney Carlisle Niland.

**AGENDA**

1. Discussion on a presentation of the Council's Strategic Plan and accomplishments to date of the goals set forth in the Plan.
2. Discussion regarding the summary of major milestones for 2012 prepared by the City Manager and on file with the City Clerk's office.
3. Discussion regarding the Strategic Plan and suggested changes presented by members of the GFOA (Government Finance Officer's Association).
4. Discussion and action regarding the Council's Strategic Plan and the priorities of the goals therein by the new City Council members and their suggestions for any changes.
5. Discussion and action regarding the policy direction established by the Strategic Plan and any suggested changes or revisions.
6. General discussion regarding the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan as they relate to the proposed FY2012 City budget and how any changes to the Strategic Plan may affect the budget process.

Mayor Cook introduced the topics of the meeting and explained that he called it to review the strategic goals with the newly convened City Council to see if they were in sync with this Council's direction for the City. He stated that he wants the new Council members to be briefed on the City's accomplishments to date for each goal. The Mayor introduced Joe Gonzalez and Teresa Gonzalez as the facilitators of the meeting. Mr. Gonzales outlined the discussion format and asked City Manager Joyce Wilson to review the major accomplishments under each of the six goals:

1. Fiscal Policy Statement: To ensure long term financial stability and sustainability of city government.
2. Customer Service Policy Statement: To be a high performance, customer focused organization.
3. Citizen Investment Policy Statement: To facilitate opportunities for citizens to be involved in local government.
4. Transportation Policy Statement: To become the lowest car dependent city in the Southwest.
5. Community Development Policy Statement: To become the most livable city in the United States and

be recognized as an international city.

6. Economic Development Policy Statement: To help businesses create high quality jobs in El Paso and revitalize targeted areas of town, thereby adding to the tax base and fostering a healthy economy.

Ms. Wilson discussed each goal and the major accomplishments. She explained the stresses on the organization that have resulted from the cutting of departmental budgets while the need for services has grown, along with the community. She told the Council that a realistic conversation is needed about what the priorities are for the Council. She also asked Council to define a level of service that is acceptable given the resources available to deliver that service.

Ms. Wilson informed the Council that she had solicited the services of the Government Finance Officers' Association to analyze our City's goals and how we budget and to make recommendations regarding budget changes that would help us achieve our goals.

Mr. Gonzalez asked for the Council members to give their overall reaction, and he invited them to ask questions.

Representative Ann Lilly had no comments.

Representative Susie Byrd expressed her frustration about the absence of measurement tools for determining the Transportation policy goals. Council never had decided how becoming the least car dependent city in the Southwest would be measured and what comparisons with other southwestern cities would be made. She then made some suggestions. Representative Byrd stated that traffic congestion mitigation as it is currently being implemented as a component of the Transportation goal has had the unintended consequence of discouraging public transit, walking and biking. She argued that, instead, it is reinforcing car dependence.

Representative Byrd also stated she would like a new goal regarding housing, utilizing existing infrastructure to better cope with the pace of growth in the City.

Representative Emma Acosta agreed with Representative Byrd that the Transportation goal was not accompanied by good measurement tools to determine its progress, success or failure.

Representative Acosta offered three additional goals:

1. Transportation: Presently she does not believe that there has been enough attention to how the ports of entry, the international bridges, are affecting the neighborhoods that surround them. If there ever is an additional port of entry built, we need to take into consideration the impact on the community in the ensuing years.
2. Economic Development: Representative Acosta stated that we do not appear to have a plan or funding to assist our existing businesses in hiring more people so as to lower the city's unemployment rate from 10%.
3. Image: Representative Acosta said that we need to improve the perception of our city's safety, regionally, nationally and internationally. We are perceived as a dangerous city, but we are not. How do we market ourselves, strategically, as a safe city?

Representative Carl Robinson said we are a large and growing city with many needs. We only have so much money and when we set priorities we need to stick with and fund them instead of adding others for which we then must hunt for funding. He urged his fellow Council members to consider the welfare of the City as a whole rather than just the individual district which they represent.

Representative Michiel Noe agreed with Representative Byrd and Representative Acosta that we need

a measurement tool for the Transportation goal. He expressed a concern that focusing on our safety as a component of our City's image may backfire, coming across as defensive. Representative Acosta explained she wants to see our safety marketed in a positive way, not defensively which she recognized could back fire.

Mayor Cook told the Council that all the southern border mayors share the same concern about communicating the safety of their communities in relation to the wide publicity regarding the violence across the border in Mexico.

Ms. Wilson said that various community groups and media groups are meeting together to develop a messaging campaign to counteract the dangerous image and promote the safety of El Paso, and that she hopes the City will join that effort once it is presented to the community.

Representative Acosta said she would like to involve the local media and engage them.

Representative Noe urged the Council to keep as a constant goal the improvement of services. He also recommended that health care be a focus. As a physician he explained that El Paso is a medically underserved area and that hospitals and private practitioners have difficulty recruiting health professionals here. We need to help private physicians in their recruitment efforts, not just assist the Medical Center of the Americas.

Representative Noe expressed his concerns about smart growth requirements and their affect on the affordability of homes for lower income people. He stated that we can not price blue collar workers out of the home market.

Representative Robinson stated that all the city representatives should be ambassadors for El Paso, promoting the message of our safe city, both to our own constituents who reside here and to regional, state, national and international markets.

Representative Holguin had no comment.

Representative Steve Ortega said that this strategic planning process gives continuity to the City's direction and supports the wisdom of the Council/Manager form of government. Priorities are no longer shifting every two years when a new mayor is elected.

Representative Ortega said that he is worried about the international bridges that he claimed are, "a failed system." He stated that all options need to be on the table for discussion, including privatization of the bridges. He said it is not acceptable that people are standing in line to cross the bridges in the hot sun for 2 ½ hours.

Representative Ortega asked that transportation and economics be examined together. He said that downtown revitalization is having "unprecedented success", and the next step is to bring housing downtown. He opined that the City needs to kick start downtown housing.

In response to a question from the Mayor, Deputy City Manager Bill Studer and City Manager Wilson commented on the City's strengthened bond rating to an AA rating.

Representative Cortney Niland said that she enjoys the strategic planning process and appreciates the back-up data provided, especially the survey of citizens. She advocated that El Paso focus on its strengths: "the M & M's: military, manufacturing, medical, and Miners..." She urged that revenue sources and opportunities need to be explored.

Representative Niland said that on customer service the Council needs to be constantly in communication

with the citizens to tell them what a good job the City is doing, the breadth of services we are providing. She is disappointed that the citizen survey shows so few people have visited the City's web site.

Representative Niland stated that as a component of downtown revitalization the entertainment areas need to be improved so as to attract more residents and tourists.

Ms. Ann Kinney, Director of Research and Consulting, Government Finance Officers' Association, gave a PowerPoint presentation (on file in City Clerk's Office) on performance management through performance measurement. She explained that the GFOA is a non-profit organization dedicated to encouraging governments to adopt best practices.

Mayor Cook observed that performance budgeting seems similar to Management by Objective.

Ms. Kinney answered that performance budgeting mixes good methodology with good technology to help governments achieve their goals.

The meeting recessed at 1:15 and reconvened at 1:22.

Mr. Joe Gonzalez, facilitator, asked Council members to add to the existing goals and he summarized what he discerned from the Council's discussion so far. He asked the Council members if they were okay with the direction for the Economic Development goal so far.

Representative Ortega asked what the City has done to collaborate with the Medical Center of the Americas beyond the representation of Representative Emma Acosta on the MCA Board of Directors. Ms. Wilson said that she also is on the Board of Directors and the previous Economic Development Director had been involved.

Representative Acosta stated that the Medical Center of the Americas (MCA) needs to brief the Council on their activities more frequently.

Representative Ortega said he would like to see public/private partnerships in the area of housing, especially in the downtown area on City land.

Representative Niland commented that the City needs to work more actively with local employers, asking them directly how we can help them create more jobs.

Mayor Cook explained that REDCO is charged with recruiting new businesses and the Hispanic Chamber and the City of El Paso are charged with helping small businesses and expanding existing businesses.

Representative Acosta stated that there does not appear to be funding—"real dollars"—for job development for our existing companies.

Ms. Wilson explained that Economic Development meets with 500 local businesses each year now. She suggested that the Council call an LRC meeting on what the City is doing for local businesses, what other cities are doing successfully and how we can revamp our program with seed money.

Representative Acosta said that businesses relocating into El Paso are not being targeted and assisted properly, specifically those relocating from Mexico who are unaware of the permit process.

Ms. Wilson answered that City staff is trying to put out a Request for Proposal to get an expert to lead us in that type of business relocation assistance.

Representative Robinson said that we need to be consistent in applying policies that help new businesses and our existing local businesses, that we give the businesses the same incentives.

Representative Lilly asked if there is a list of all the properties the City owns. Ms. Wilson answered, "Yes." Representative Lilly said we need to get it out for developers to see. Ms. Wilson explained that there is a list on the City's web site of properties the City wants to dispose of.

Representative Holguin asked what happened to the Mayor's summit on recruiting a big theme park.

Mayor Cook explained that the talks with the company stalled once they learned that the City did not own Ascarate Park.

Public Comment: The Mayor invited public comment.

Lisa Turner, citizen, urged the Council to put 1% of the total budget in economic development. She stated that 65 million dollars has been spent out of the City and that this "low hanging fruit" could be better spent here with local vendors.

Ms. Wilson said that a state law just passed that allowed for local preference in evaluating bids.

Ms. Wilson said she wants to examine the activities of the Economic Development Department now and see if they address the current priorities. She wants to determine how we redefine our relationship with REDCO and our other partners in economic development.

Representative Acosta asked if this would happen at the Economic Development budget hearing or at a Legislative Review Committee meeting.

Mayor Cook asked Ms. Wilson where we are in the recruitment for a new Economic Development Director.

Ms. Wilson answered that she is doing nothing until the whole process of economic development direction is decided so that the job search can be structured to maximize effective recruitment.

Representative Byrd said that if our goal is to reduce traffic congestion, many of the current tools we use do not promote independence from cars. She gave an example of how the insertion of a right hand turn lane in a congested intersection has a negative impact on pedestrians who then must navigate across a wider area and an additional lane of traffic. She opined that sometimes promoting independence from cars may come at the expense of traffic mitigation, and if so, we need to choose independence from cars.

Representative Niland pointed out that of the citizen survey respondents, 77% said they do not use public transportation and 50% said that reducing traffic congestion is the most important goal under transportation.

Representative Byrd countered that the range of transportation choices affects people's attitudes toward modes of transport. She then passed out a survey (on file in the City Clerk's Office) that showed differing attitudes when choices are available as opposed to when they are not available. She argued that in El Paso we have not given our constituents transportation choices.

Representative Ortega suggested that the transportation goal be rewritten to say, "Use Mass Transit to mitigate traffic congestion."

Mayor Cook said he believes the City is achieving that goal even if all of the metrics are not yet in place.

Representative Byrd observed that we do not know where we, El Paso, stand with our Southwest city competitors. How are we becoming less car dependent than they are?

Representative Acosta stated that we have not had the mass transit infrastructure.

Representative Niland agreed that alternative sources of transportation should be explored.

Representative Byrd told the Council that a Metropolitan Planning Organization study showed a huge, pent-up demand for public transit options.

Representative Lilly said that traffic safety is a huge concern for the public who enjoy walking and biking and that the striping on the streets needs to be done properly to protect people who walk and bike.

Representative Robinson said that the image many people in El Paso have of public transportation, the buses, is still based on the Sun Metro of five to six years ago when the operations were very poor. We need to improve the image now that operations have improved. He said that you can not make people walk.

Representative Byrd said that people want to walk, but the roads are not set up to facilitate walking.

Representative Robinson said it is not realistic to say that people will bike 15-16 miles to work, though people close to their workplace may.

Representative Holguin agreed with Representative Robinson. People who use the buses can not afford a car, typically, he said. "Ours is a car society whether we like it or not." He questioned spending a lot of time, money and effort on public transit projects when people love their cars.

Representative Byrd objected to Representative Holguin's conclusions. She said that cities that invest in promoting alternative transportation see those options utilized more by citizens.

Mr. Gonzalez recommended that performance management be used for this goal, to gather data and to make decisions.

Mayor Cook suggested revising the goal.

Ms. Wilson said she would work with Traffic and Transportation to devise new methods of traffic mitigation to take into account the impact on pedestrians and bike riders.

Representative Acosta stated that other modes of transportation like walking, biking and future modes need to be incorporated in our transportation goal.

Representative Byrd suggested the addition of the words, "by promoting the ease of alternative modes of transportation".

Mr. Gonzalez grouped Council's expressed desires into categories.

Representative Byrd suggested adding to the housing goal, "to focus on existing infrastructure to address increased housing demands."

Representative Ortega said he would like to see housing concentrated in core areas.

Representative Niland commented that the cost of doing business according to smart growth principles

can price lower income people out of the home market.

Representative Ortega said that sprawl does not help anyone.

Representative Byrd said that the Council's duty as policy makers should be to consider if the buyers of homes can afford to live there, taking into account transportation costs and other factors.

Representative Niland would like to know how many of our constituents would like to live in smart growth high density developments.

Representative Noe said we need to discourage sprawl while encouraging people to stay within the city limits in affordable housing.

A new goal was devised: "To utilize existing infrastructure for housing with an emphasis on the downtown area."

Representative Acosta reiterated that we need to work on improving the ports of entry and maybe create a Ports of Entry Authority. She urged the Council to better analyze the needs of commercial users.

Representative Ortega said that the number of Border Patrol agents authorized in the federal budget has gone up, but the number of Customs officers has decreased. As a result, wait times at the bridges are longer.

Representative Byrd recommended that we contact federal authorities about using Border Patrol agents to augment customer service coverage at the bridges to alleviate the wait times.

Representative Niland would like to re-examine the free bridge as a potential revenue source. Or, if that is not possible, to collect tolls prior to the entrance to the bridge on the United States side.

Mayor Cook explained that both nations, on a federal level, would have to agree on any change to the bridges. It would be very complex.

Mayor Cook asked Ms. Wilson to share the Cambridge study with the new Council members.

Representative Acosta stated that the business community is against tolling the free bridge, so there are many obstacles to doing that.

Representative Niland observed that commercial traffic is utilizing the free bridge to avoid the tolls.

Representative Ortega suggested a new goal: "To have the most competitive average bridge wait times for pedestrian and vehicular traffic along the southern U. S. border."

Mayor Cook cautioned that the challenge will be where you begin timing the wait. He said the starting point has been an issue in the past.

Representative Robinson said that sometimes Council and City Staff appear as adversaries and sometimes City staff and citizens appear as adversaries. He recommended that Council improve the City's image so it is clear that it is not "us" against "them", but rather that it is all of us in it together.

Representative Niland said that the citizen survey shows that 88% of our citizens have not had contact with a City Representative. She said the Council needs to be constantly communicating with the citizens better and letting them know what the returns are on their taxpayer investment.

Representative Robinson explained that he has a community meeting each week and that how Council members get information out to their constituents is their responsibility.

Representative Ortega commented that he gets the most complaints about Development Services.

Ms. Wilson outlined the efforts that have been made to improve services in Development Services.

Representative Niland suggested that maybe there should be a City video on "How to get a Building Permit."

Representative Robinson stated that internal communication among departments needs to be improved, too.

Mr. Gonzalez summed up that Council is saying that we should constantly be looking at improving services.

Representative Lilly shared a positive experience with permitting that a new business, a restaurant, had in her district.

Mr. Alan Shubert, City Engineer, explained that the positive experience she cited was the result of efforts Development Services is making with businesses.

Mr. Gonzalez asked for the Council to wrap up the meeting with their final comments.

Representative Acosta asked when creation of a Parks District will go to the voters. Mayor Cook said a constitutional amendment would go on the November ballot state-wide. After that, if it passes, the City of El Paso will have to go to the voters in 2013 and we need to be ready to present it to the voters.

Mayor Cook advised the Council members that the City Attorney had notified him that the Council will need to have language for the Charter election ready by August 16<sup>th</sup> for the November election.

Representative Acosta, Representative Ortega and Ms. Wilson discussed an election for Quality of Life bond projects and when it would be held. Ms. Wilson said it would be held in the Fall of 2012 so between now and then the Council needs to decide what the projects will be and what the size of the bond election will be, dollar wise.

Representative Robinson asked how long it took for the City to prepare for the 2000 Quality of Life bond election.

Deputy City Manager Debbie Hamlyn answered that it took one year to prepare.

Representative Ortega told the Council that Oklahoma City should be used as the model for a successful bond election.

Representative Byrd asked if the City Charter Commission will work with the Rules Legislative Review Committee as they did with the last charter election. She was told it would.

Representative Byrd requested that Police and Sheriff consolidation should be discussed with the Police budget.

Representative Byrd told Representative Noe and Representative Niland that El Paso City Council is a group that disagrees, sometimes fundamentally, but that supports each other.

Representative Lilly welcomed the new Council members.



Representative Ortega stated that he has no confidence in the Central Appraisal District's accuracy in determining the property value of commercial properties. Representative Lilly explained they can not use sales information. Representative Ortega would like to see an additional to the state legislative agenda to have a public sector advocate to argue the taxing entity's position at appeal hearings for CAD valuation.

Deputy City Manager Bill Studer outlined the difficulties in commercial valuations and doubted that the State legislature would approve a public sector advocate.

Mayor Cook said that the Texas Municipal League has been pushing changes in the CAD's method of commercial valuation, but the idea can never get any traction.

Representative Robinson stated he does not understand why there is a difference between residential and commercial properties when it comes to determining unused space that is not used to determine valuation. He compared unused bedrooms in a home to unused floors in a commercial building and why the former is used as a basis for valuation but the later is not by CADs.

Representative Niland said she liked what Representative Robinson said about working as a team for the City as a whole.

Mr. Gonzalez asked the Council members how they were feeling about the meeting.

Representative Lilly said that the Council has many goals and we better get going on them. Regarding the CAD, any changes will face lots of roadblocks.

Representative Byrd said she is glad to work with the new Council.

Representative Acosta said it was a great strategic plan.

Representative Robinson said he looks forward to working with the new Council.

Representative Noe said he is impressed by how well everyone works together.

Representative Holguin said he learned that he needs to walk more.

Representative Ortega said that refining goals for downtown and transportation has been productive and the healthy debate on development issues is welcome.

Representative Niland said she is impressed and re-energized by the momentum of the team.

Mayor Cook invited Ms. Lisa Turner to comment.

Ms. Turner stated that she is opposed to allowing the Sheriff to become the chief law enforcement officer of the County in any consolidation of the Police Dept and the Sheriff's Office. Regarding the CAD, she observed that the taxing entities pass the CAD's budget and have that control over the entity.

Representative Noe questioned who would preside over a Police/Sheriff's Office consolidation. The Mayor explained that under the state statute it would have to be the Sheriff.

Mayor Cook said the meeting met his expectations and he is looking forward to the Charter election.

The meeting adjourned due to the loss of a quorum at 3:08 p.m.

APPROVED AS TO CONTENT:

---

Richarda Duffy Momsen, City Clerk